

BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY: Aiko Muramoto Kurashige

*" . . . I had a man that was taking care of us [in Lahaina] when we were small. Then after my father died, he came Lana'i as the blacksmith. They need blacksmith at the ranch, yeah. . . . He came to pick me up and he said, 'You go--I going take you Lana'i. You go help Mrs. [Masuka] Abe and George Munro--for a while, yeah, kitchen.'"*

Because her mother died when she was an infant, Aiko Muramoto Kurashige was adopted and lived in Lahaina. At the age of fourteen, in 1922, she moved to Kō'ele, Lāna'i with her guardian, a blacksmith who found work at Lāna'i Ranch. Aiko helped Mrs. Masuka Abe, a cook for ranch manager George Munro's household. She also assisted Mrs. Helen Jean Forbes at the ranch store.

After returning briefly to Lahaina, Aiko returned to Lāna'i and found work as a domestic in Lāna'i City. In 1925, she married Iwao Kurashige, a Hawaiian Pineapple Company employee. She later worked in the meat department at Richard's Shopping Center. She retired in 1976.

Aiko today is active at the Lāna'i Senior Center and the Lāna'i Hongwanji Mission. She enjoys yard work and playing the ukulele.

Tape No. 16-14-1-88  
ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Aiko Muramoto Kurashige (AK)

August 29, 1988

Lāna'i City, Lāna'i

BY: Mina Morita (MM)

MM: This is an interview with Aiko Kurashige at Lāna'i City, Lāna'i, at her home, on Monday, August 29, 1988, for the Kō'ele oral history project.

Okay. Mrs. Kurashige, let us start with you telling me your name, your full name.

AK: Aiko Muramoto Kurashige.

MM: And where were you born?

AK: Lahaina, Maui.

MM: And what's your birth date?

AK: November 20, 1908.

MM: Okay. And your father's name is . . .

AK: Mansaku Muramoto.

MM: Okay, and you had mentioned earlier, you don't remember too much about your mother.

AK: Mm mmm, no.

MM: But could you--she died at your childbirth, when you were born?

AK: Yeah. When I was born, she died in the hospital.

MM: Uh huh. And then, your father took care of you?

AK: No. My father went to Japan.

MM: Oh, I see.

AK: And then I was brought up by another people, see. Just like,

something like hānai, you know, no more . . .

MM: No paperwork. They just take care of you? I see. And what were their names?

AK: Iba.

MM: Iba. And were they from Lahaina, too?

AK: Yeah. They were from Lahaina.

MM: And both their first names, the Ibas' names . . .

AK: Ah, Kanekichi, I think, something like that.

MM: Kanekichi?

AK: Mm.

MM: Okay. And do you remember where you lived in Lahaina? What part?

AK: Well, we used to live in Lahaina here and there, see, so there were times I live right in the town. And then, I live way by the Māla Wharf, you know. We moved here and there, and then the last I know, I lived in the Front Street by the Methodist church.

MM: I see. What kind of work did these people do?

AK: Blacksmith.

MM: Oh, I see.

AK: They the blacksmith. The man that brought me up, he's a blacksmith.

MM: I see. Was he from--born in Hawai'i or from Japan?

AK: No. He's from Japan.

MM: I see. Okay. And did you have brothers and sisters, or were there any other children?

AK: Yeah. He had one son.

MM: And you?

AK: Yeah.

MM: When your father left, you had some brothers and sisters, too.

AK: I don't have. But, I have a sister, my real sister, she was brought up by somebody else, see.

MM: Uh huh. So after your father went back to Japan, all the children

went to different . . .

AK: Just she and I.

MM: I see. Tell us---do you remember anything about school, going to school in Lahaina?

AK: Yeah. Kam [Kamehameha III] School.

MM: Kam School. And . . .

AK: I went. I know Miss--the last teacher, I was about sixth grade, yeah. She was Miss [Gertrude] Seong.

MM: Seong?

AK: Clarence Seong's sister. But I know the boy because he was same class with me, see.

MM: So, and you also mentioned that you had different jobs in Lahaina. What kind of work did you used to do?

AK: Well, I worked for a while caring for children, you know, small.

MM: Uh huh, baby-sitting. And where was that?

AK: In Lahaina. Well, this person owned a hotel, so I used to work for them. I worked just for keeping the baby, that's all. I never worked in the hotel.

MM: Oh, you worked for the people that owned the hotel?

AK: Yeah, yeah.

MM: Oh, baby-sitting for them.

AK: Baby-sitting for them.

MM: I see, I see.

AK: Then I went to work for . . .

MM: Was it called Fukada . . .

AK: . . . another store, ice cream fountain.

MM: Oh, but the baby-sitting one, you worked for Fukada Hotel?

AK: Yeah, baby-sitting--I was working for Fukada, see. But this ice cream fountain is another person, Goto, and I used to work for him.

MM: Did you make the ice cream at that place?

AK: Yeah. Used to make the ice cream, anyway.

MM: How did they make it cold? Where did they get the ice from?

AK: Oh that, I don't know.

(Laughter)

MM: Okay, that's okay.

AK: That, I don't know.

MM: Then after that job, what happened?

AK: I came Lāna'i.

MM: Yeah. How did you get to Lāna'i?

AK: Oh, because my---I had a man that was taking care of us when we were small. Then after my father died, he came Lāna'i as the blacksmith. They need blacksmith at the ranch, yeah. So, so happened that he came back again. He came to pick me up and he said, "You go--I going take you Lāna'i. You work for--go help Mrs. [Masuka] Abe."

MM: So, who was the man that was the blacksmith? What was his name?

AK: Tsuida. His name was [Toyoki] Tsuida, see. T-S-U-I-D-A.

MM: Oh, okay.

AK: He brought me here, see, first. Then, and he used to stay at Abe, see. So, he told me, go help Mrs. Abe and George Munro--for a while, yeah, kitchen. Because lots of--all the people that was working for the Hawaiian Pine, no more house. So, Munro used to have all that peoples at Munro's home for a while until the company built the clubhouse [in Lāna'i City]. The clubhouse, they were building a clubhouse [i.e., boardinghouse], but it wasn't done, finished yet. So I worked there about (three) weeks, then I got so tired and lonesome, too, yeah. Then I said, "Oh, more better I go home."

MM: I see. So when you were working with Mrs. Abe, what kind of work did you do?

AK: Well, just in the kitchen, help Mrs. Abe. That's all.

MM: Cooking.

AK: I help her wash the dishes.

MM: What kind of work did Mrs. Abe used to do?

AK: Cook.

MM: Only cook?

AK: Yeah. She does cooking . . .

MM: She had somebody else cleaning house?

AK: And then, yeah, clean the house.

MM: I see. And what kind work did Mr. [Eizo] Abe do?

AK: Mr.--what Mr. Abe used to do, yeah? He was working for Munro up the ranch, I know but . . .

MM: You didn't know what kind job.

AK: Um, I don't know. I kind of forget. [Eizo Abe was a handyman for the Munros.]

MM: Okay. (Chuckles) And then you also mentioned that you used to work in the store, too?

AK: Yeah, for Mrs. [Helen Jean] Forbes after my--in the afternoon, well, I get through with Mrs. Abe, so I come to the store, and so happened the store is opened, Mrs. Forbes ask me to hit the bell and help her, eh. So I used to go hit the bell for her.

MM: Hit the bell?

AK: Yeah. The . . .

MM: Why did you hit the bell?

AK: To let the people down here know the groceries is here.

MM: Oh, I see. So, who used to come to the store to buy the groceries?

AK: The people down here.

MM: In Lāna'i City?

AK: In the camp down here, they used to call camp, eh, down here?

MM: (Chuckles) So had two camps? Like had the camp up at the ranch and the camp down in Lāna'i City?

AK: The ranch people, they know the store is right there and the people live around there, eh. So, they could hear the bell, so, well, when the bell ring, they come and buy.

MM: But the bell was rung for the . . .

AK: We had everybody to come and let them know that the groceries are here, the bread and . . .

MM: Uh huh. And so, was this only certain days or every day?

AK: Yeah, yeah, certain days. I wonder if one week, two times or something? I know was middle of the week. I kind of forget what day it was, but anyway it was Tuesday, Wednesday and end of the week, I think.

MM: And what kind of stuff used to come in?

AK: Bread, potato and that kind. All that.

MM: And what other kind of stuff they used to carry in the store?

AK: Well, little bit of canned goods.

MM: And anything else?

AK: We hardly had vegetables. Like fruits, we didn't have, those days.

MM: Did people grow their own? Did the people grow their own vegetables?

AK: Oh, I don't know down here because I'm not staying down here.

MM: But up at the ranch?

AK: I wonder, yeah, some of the ladies, I see the Nishimura family, you know, that Nishimura family, they used to live in the [Ranch] Camp. And in the backyard, they have garden. (The) Kawanos (lived behind the Nishimuras).

MM: Yeah, they all have garden.

AK: They had their garden. I see they plant onion. Not perfect kind vegetable, but they plant what they need.

MM: Yeah, yeah. Did you go out--used to look the cowboys?

AK: No, I never used to go, but I know when the Nishimura boys was here, well, they tell, "Oh, we go up the mountain and we used to go ride horse and go from the Munro's, up," that . . .

MM: Up Lāna'ihale.

AK: Lāna'ihale. We used to go on the [horse]. That's the only thing we have. No more cars, eh, so we gotta go on the horse.

MM: Yeah. I see.

(Laughter)

AK: But them, they were all small. There was one boy that stay (in) Moloka'i, but now, I think he's dead, I think. Nishimura, yeah. He

was married to a Hawaiian girl, I think. And they have children, I hear, but I haven't met him.

MM: So which Nishimura is this? Jimmy or Susumu?

AK: No. Susumu is the oldest, yeah?

MM: Oh, so this is the younger brothers.

AK: Yeah. The younger brothers are. . . . His younger brother is Tsuneo, see. And he and I, we are the same age. And Shigeo was there, but Shigeo is . . .

MM: Shigeo is Jimmy?

AK: That's the one. Shigeo, but he's one or two [years] younger than I. But we all used to go on the horseback with the sister, yeah, we used to go up. Those days, well, not like, bad like here now, I think. I haven't been up there for so many years, I don't know how the road looks like.

MM: Yeah. Still can go. You can go with four-wheel drive.

AK: Yeah? We used to go most of those days, you gotta go on horseback or otherwise, you get nowhere. But only the people that go back and forth down here, well, they used to walk, come up. No more cars, yeah.

MM: Yeah, right. Okay. And then so, do you remember anything else about the ranch area? Do you remember what Mr. Munro was like?

AK: Well, he was a good man. Well, I don't know what you mean by that, but, oh, Father Munro and Mother [Jean] Munro were very good. I know Mother Munro was a good cook. Oh, she was really good cook.

MM: Did you used to have to work with her, too?

AK: Yeah. We used to help. Mother Munro likes to cook, so she and Mrs. Abe is there, so most time Mother Munro cooks and then asks Mrs. Abe to help her. Because she was a really good cook, I tell you.

MM: So all these people that were staying with them, she would cook for all of them, and everybody eat together?

AK: Oh, yeah. She do all the cooking because the other ladies don't cook. They're all from the Mainland, eh?

MM: I see. So these are all the supervisors for Hawaiian Pine?

AK: Yeah, yeah, yeah. That's right.

MM: And they bring their wives but. . . . I see.



AK: They all were here, most of them. They're all supervisors.

MM: How about--were the Munro children at home, too? Did you know them? The Munro children? Did they have children?

AK: Yeah, they had, I kind of forget. I know Georgina, Jean, Ruby and then James. Well, only one boy, yeah. I kind of forget their names. So, such a long time, that, ho boy, I forget them.

(Taping stops, then resumes.)

MM: So there were lot of people in the house then?

AK: Up Munro's?

MM: Yeah.

AK: Oh, yeah. But, no, the girls were at school in Honolulu. They were all up in Punahou, I guess.

MM: So, what was the house like? The Munro house? How many bedrooms did it have?

AK: Bedrooms? They had about, I think, about seven bedrooms. It's a real big house, more like a clubhouse.

MM: Like the Hotel Lāna'i, big like that?

AK: No. Wasn't big like that, but maybe double times my house.

MM: I see. So your house is how many bedrooms?

AK: We have one, two, three, and then here's one small one. We had four bedrooms, see, and with the kitchen and the parlor, yeah. But, no, Father Munro's place had about six rooms, I guess.

MM: You know, you said you used to do a lot of helping in the kitchen, cooking and stuff. You used to be in the kitchen a lot. What kind of stove did they have in the kitchen?

AK: Oh, they had kerosene stove and gas stove. I know they used to have all gas lantern, yeah, before.

MM: Oh. So every night, they light the lantern?

AK: Yeah, they light the lantern, yeah.

MM: And then, how about--what kind of food did they used to cook?

AK: The kind of food they used to serve?

MM: Yeah.

AK: (Laughs) Well, most time, they make steak and sometime cook with stew like that, they used to have lots of mutton, too, because they have lots of sheep. Then she used to make with the sheep, most time, curry stew, I think, in big pot, because had the big gang, yeah, and then men working, with the wives.

MM: I see. Okay. You stayed with the Abes, where did they live?

AK: Mr. Abe?

MM: Mm hmm.

AK: Oh, they lived right behind the store. You know the big house inside?

MM: Uh huh, uh huh.

AK: Right. That was the Forbes house before.

MM: Right.

AK: And then, right next.

MM: Oh, and they had a house right next. Okay.

AK: Yeah. They were all living over there. I know, because the William Kwon, [Sr.] folks, the parents [Gi Hong Kwon] used to live. There was a lane and then the other side, they all used to live, see. But the Forbes, that house, you know, where you folks stayed [MM once lived in the former Forbes house], that's the house that Forbes used to stay, but maybe a little bit more small, not big like that, no.

MM: Yeah, right.

AK: And the store was in front. That's why, like here the residence, and that's the store over there. You know, you gotta walk towards the . . .

MM: Yeah, yeah.

AK: The store wasn't so big, too, itself, see.

MM: What did the store look like? I mean, what kind of stuff was in there?

AK: The store? Well, the store looks something like this house. Had the porch, you know the old-style house.

MM: Yeah, the porch run around the front.

AK: Yeah, yeah. One small little thing.

MM: Was it a very big store?

AK: No, small store.

MM: Small store. And did they have clothes inside?

AK: Clothes? Uh uh [no].

MM: Only food kind?

AK: Only food. They used to sell only food. I never see clothes.

MM: Did they carry any medicine or anything like that?

AK: I wonder. I kind of forget.

(Laughter)

AK: I wonder if Mrs. Forbes used to carry some kind of medicine. I don't know. I don't quite remember.

MM: Yeah. Besides ringing the bell in the store, what other kind of jobs did you have in the store?

AK: Oh nothing. Only hit the bell and help her go carry things. That's all. I don't work completely in there. I never get paid.

MM: Oh, okay. So you just went to go help her.

AK: Yeah, yeah. So she just always call me in the afternoon because where I live, from the window, she yell. I can hear her. From the other side of the house, she call, I can hear her. Because I never get paid. Even the Munros', I go, I never get paid.

MM: (Chuckles) You just go and help.

AK: I don't know because I stayed there about (three) weeks, huh. But, every day, I don't go, see. When Mrs. Abe think that she's busy, she call me. And then when she leave the house--and she always come home every now and then, checks if I'm all right, see. So, when she comes home and if she need help, she tell, "Oh, come." And then I used to go with her.

MM: I see.

AK: So, I never go get paid.

MM: How come you got homesick?

AK: Oh. No more nothing to do, and I got kind of. . . . I thought, ah, might as well I go home Lahaina. That's why they said, "Why you want to go home?"

And I said, "Nah, I don't want." I said, "I rather go home. My brother is there, so I better go."

MM: Okay. So how did you get back to Lahaina?

AK: Then the second time, well, my sister-in-law's father came, see. He was over here, a carpenter. He came over, then he told me, he going take me go, come [back] Lāna'i. Because they said, because the Haoles over there, one of the Haoles, they are from Mainland, and they like to have somebody that talk English to work. Because they cannot understand pidgin English. So, my brother them, the friend said, "Oh, you might as well go. More better you go there." That's how I came back [to Lāna'i] again. That was about only three weeks afterwards, I think, I came back again.

MM: How did you folks go back and forth? By boat?

AK: By boat.

MM: Yeah. Whose boat?

AK: Company boat, I think. Betty D.

MM: That's the boat name, I see. So this next time you came back, you went to work for, who now?

AK: I went to work for (Mrs.) Root.

MM: Root.

AK: Root.

MM: Okay. And he [David E. Root] was the engineer for the [Kaumalapau] Harbor?

AK: Yeah, he was, I think, an engineer, I guess, for down the harbor and the road. And then they said because he the one that architect the camp homes.

MM: I see. So where did he live? When you came back the second time, where did Root live?

AK: Up the hill up there.

MM: Which house?

AK: Um, they said that's [David] Murdock's house. You know, not in the corner.

MM: Oh, the assistant manager one?

AK: Yeah. Not way in the corner, now. The second--from there on the corner, you going up, you see in the corner, this corner, one house and the next house. You know where the Deshas are, this side. That house.

and the next house. You know where the Deshas are, this side.  
That house.

MM: Oh, okay. I see. And then where did you stay?

AK: Well, I stayed for a while with my sister-in-law's father, see, the old man, for a while I stayed.

MM: What was his name?

AK: Fujimoto.

MM: Fujimoto?

AK: Uh huh. He was a carpenter, see.

MM: For the ranch?

AK: No. He was carpenter of Hawaiian Pine.

MM: Hawaiian Pine Company. Okay. And worked . . .

AK: But only for a while I stayed with him. Then the Roots told me, "We have an extra room, so Aiko, you might as well stay with us." And I stayed with them up there.

MM: Okay. What kind of work did you do for them?

AK: Oh. And I had another lady. She was the cook, see. And I used to help her. Then we used to most time, share the work. When I wash, she iron. And when she do cooking, she do part of the kitchen clean, I clean the bath. We used to share the--one house--but we used to share the work together. That, we used to get paid, see.

MM: Yeah. What kind of pay did you get for that? Do you remember?  
What kind of pay you used to get for doing . . .

AK: What kind of pay?

MM: Yeah.

AK: Twenty-five dollars a month.

MM: Twenty-five a month? And plus they feed you . . .

AK: I stayed there, I eat with them.

MM: I see. Did they have any children you had to take care of?

AK: No, don't have children.

MM: Just the two of them? Uh huh.

MM: Yeah, have a little cottage in the back.

AK: Until now, what, they have a home behind, yeah, working quarters--servant quarters, yeah. But, that house I was working, well, she and her husband stayed in the servant's quarters, but I used to stay--we had a guest room, so I used to stay in there, the guest room. But we very seldom had guests. When we have guests, I shift out, I used to stay in Mr. Root's study room. I shift the bed over there. (Chuckles) But most time, I stayed in the guest room. (Laughs) She tells me, "Oh, Aiko, I'm sorry. You move in Mr. Root's study room." And then we move the bed and (chuckles). . . . Because the rooms were kind of big, because had two bedrooms with one study room, see. Mr. Root's study room is big, too. And the guest room is big. So, we had the big bed in it, and they have a single bed in one that I sleep. I didn't want to go sleep in that double bed, (MM chuckles) I said too much work. I fixing my own bed, better. Fixing extra bed, I tell, too much work. Because those people were real nice. They didn't have any children. They were planning to take me go Mainland.

MM: How come you didn't go?

AK: (Laughs) Well, when they were about to leave, well, I was married [in 1925], eh. I was pregnant, so Mrs. Root didn't want to take me go. She was a nurse up the Mainland. And she said, "We travel a lot, so," she said. . . .

MM: Yeah, you had family.

AK: Yeah. Not so good, you know. "Anything happen to you while you are up the Mainland, well, it's our responsibility to take care of you so." And Mr. Root said, that's right, too, you know. Then she said, "If you don't come with us," they said they going adopt a girl. And I think two years afterwards, they sure found one girl. Her name Barbara, I think. And after they adopted the girl, only he came back. Mr. Root came back to see me. And he said, "Well, Aiko, would you like to go back with me?"

I said, "No, because I have my two children." I said, "I don't want. My husband [Iwao Kurashige] said no." He [AK's husband] don't know up the Mainland, eh. He said, since he working for Dole [Hawaiian Pine], so he said he'll stay here.

MM: How did you meet your husband?

AK: Down here. We stayed close by, see. You know how the homes I used to grow up, not far [apart] like this, but was near, yeah, all the homes. And he used to live--we used to see him a lot because he used to come to the lady next door. And lots of young boys used to come to next door, the lady's. Because the lady was so nice to them, yeah. She cooked for them, see, when they come. That's how I met him. (Chuckles)

MM: I see. And what kind of work was he doing for . . .

AK: Tractor. Caterpillar.

MM: I see. With Hawaiian Pine?

AK: Yeah, yeah. Work in Hawaiian Pine.

MM: Oh, and then . . .

AK: He stay here quite long. Like me, sixty-four years. He came in, I think, 1924.

MM: Nineteen twenty-four.

AK: That year.

MM: So Mr. Kurashige was from where, originally?

AK: From where? From Wahiawā, [O'ahu]. He used to work there for . . .

MM: Hawaiian Pine.

AK: . . . Hawaiian Pine.

MM: In Wahiawā?

AK: Yeah.

MM: And then moved over here. He came by himself?

AK: Yeah, he came by himself. The company brought him, that's why.

MM: Okay, let me see. After you worked for Mr. Root, and you got married, did you work some more after that?

AK: No, they left the island, so. Yeah, I worked for the banker for a while with my [daughter] Setsuko, Cookie. I had Cookie with me, yeah.

MM: And you take her to work with you?

AK: And then that lady--when Mr. [William S.] Cooper was here alone, yeah, and then he said he ask somebody if I going to work for him because the wife is not here. So I worked for him for quite a while. Then afterward, he send his wife.

MM: And he was a bank manager [for Bishop Bank]?

AK: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Cooper. (Pause)

MM: And then, did you . . .

AK: My husband was working Caterpillar night shift, so it's kind of hard for him to sleep, yeah, with--you know how small babies are.

MM: The noise, yeah. Yeah.

AK: So I thought, well, no good, working. And he cannot get enough sleep. I thought, well, not too good. So, I said, I'm going to quit and then they told me, well, they give me pay until I get another lady for them. So I worked for a month, month and a half I think, then I went to find for them a lady.

MM: Take your place.

AK: And then, I quit. I said, "Oh, Mrs. [Kate W.] Cooper, I cannot stand."  
She said, "Why?"

I said, "Oh, my baby cries and my husband works night shift, and it's kind of hard."

But Mrs. Cooper said, "No, you can bring the baby."

I said, "No, no. I cannot bring the baby to the house." Because it's right near, yeah. So, but Mr. Cooper understands more. Then he said, "Yeah, I think so, Aiko. I think so, yeah. But where you going to stay?"

I said, "Oh, they going find me a house." Then I came down, I stayed in a camp house. And about not too long, the doctor came to get me because those days, they used to get hard time getting ladies that can speak English.

MM: Oh, I see.

AK: There were lots of ladies, but they all Japan born, and they cannot understand English. They used to have hard time finding workers. So they always come and get me (chuckles).

MM: When they come get you, do they pay you good?

AK: Oh, they pay me. Well, that kind of work, I go, they pay me.

MM: Good pay?

AK: Yeah, good pay for those days compared to now, boy. (MM chuckles.) Then I went to work for doctor. His name Dr. [Richard J.] Wilkinson. That is an old doctor, Dr. Wilkinson. But not Dr. [William H.] Wilkinson that over here.

MM: Yeah, new one.

AK: Different doctor. And that one, all right. There was a nurse there, see, Mrs. [May Pearl] Finch. She came to get me. She heard the daughter, you know, Mrs. Sutherland. You know where Mrs. [Ruth]



Hobdy lives?

MM: Yeah.

AK: That Mrs. Sutherland used to live in that house. And was his mother. She was a nurse. She came to get me. She said, "Oh, Aiko, won't you work for doctor?"

Oh, with this girl, and I was pregnant, see. I said, "Oh, I'm having a baby again."

She said, "Don't worry, we won't make you work hard."

I said, "Oh." So I went. But, wasn't so hard up there because when I think I must do something, wash clothes or do something, the nurse used to come pick up the baby, take him to the hospital.

MM: Oh, so help you out, baby-sit.

AK: Yeah, and she go baby-sit. Because those days, not too much--well, I don't know, patient or what. But anyway, the nurse used to . . .

MM: Those days, how did people wash clothes?

AK: Wash clothes? Washhouse.

MM: Uh huh. All by hand?

AK: Oh, yeah. All by hand. (Laughs) No such thing as washing machine.

MM: Hard work.

AK: And then, ho boy, those days, the road not too good. Dusty road, yeah. Ho, you try hang the diapers out. Ho boy, sometime windy days--before it get dries, that thing is all red.

MM: Yeah. 'Cause all dirt road?

AK: Yeah, dirt road. I don't know how your mother folks used to be when they first came, I don't know. I don't know what year your mother folks came here [Kō'ele], I don't know.

MM: Morita mother? Morita side or Richard . . .

AK: Morita.

MM: Fifty-two, 1952, so had electricity.

AK: Oh. No more electric, eh?

MM: Had.

AK: Had electric? Oh. (Chuckles)

MM: Yeah, so have washing machine. We lucky. We had washing machine.  
(Chuckles)

AK: Oh. I see. You folks stayed up the ranch, too, then?

MM: We moved--first they stayed down where Uncle Sol them stay, and later on, they moved up the ranch.

AK: Oh. You folks came in '52 [and lived in the former Forbes home]. Oh, after the war, eh. Oh. Then not so bad.

MM: So, all when you were having children, you keep working?

AK: Well, yes, I was working until all I had my children. Because when I had my second one, I was working--when I was pregnant--I was working. Then I came home, after I had my second, third, and then the boy. . . . Oh yeah, when I had my boy, I used to work up the clubhouse.

MM: Doing what?

AK: Well, I clean house, go wash.

(Taping stops, then resumes.)

AK: Because when I used to work clubhouse to fix the bed, well, those days, all this--the Haole boys were here, see, and the Chinese boys [i.e., students hired by Hawaiian Pineapple Company to work in Lana'i's pineapple fields during the summer months]. I used to wash their clothes and. . . .

MM: All by hand again, still yet?

AK: Yeah, but when I wash up there, clubhouse, they had one washing machine, so I washed there. But not too late, I got machine, see. I had. Then everybody used to [wash] by machine. They set 'em in the. . . . You know, they used to have a, what you call, a community washhouse. But me, I stay down there, and I find a mason next door help me to make one right in my house, he cement the house, cement the walls, and he put tub for me. Then I put my washing machine there, so, I never come up here.

MM: Uh huh, uh huh. So you had your own . . .

AK: Yeah, my own down there.

MM: . . . behind your house. Make it easier.

AK: But it wasn't supposed to be like that. I guess because company no like.

MM: How about for 'au'au? Did you have to go to the community . . .

AK: Yeah, we used to go for the community 'au'au place, yeah.

MM: Yeah. How about toilet, too? You used to go, too?

AK: Yeah, yeah. One side man, one side lady.

MM: Uh huh. Oh, hard time. What about nighttime when you have to go? When you sleeping? (Chuckles)

AK: Oh, nighttime? We always meet ladies, eh, on the same camp. Same place, eh. We meet them and we all go together. I used to go with one lady because she call me, she tell we go bathe, and we used to go bathe. So, no trouble.

MM: Yeah. And you talk story.

AK: Yeah, yeah.

(Laughter)

AK: No trouble.

MM: Okay. So that's how the ladies used to meet when they go take a bath?

AK: Yeah, yeah, down the washhouse and then to the bathhouse. That's where we all meet. That's how we make conversation more, because especially washhouse.

MM: Yeah. So, I guess then, with lots of people talking, not so bad.

AK: Yeah.

MM: (Chuckles) I see.

AK: Now, the people that come now, it's so convenient for them. Yeah, the stores and the homes and everything, yeah. That's why we always think, my husband and I, because we came here from the start, eh, so we know. Because, you know, when we first came here, believe it or not, over here, the bathhouse, more small than that tin house of mine. (AK points to shed in her yard.)

MM: The tool shed? Like the Sears tool shed, that's the . . .

AK: Yeah, with one small top.

MM: Oh, small building.

AK: Yeah, you'd be surprised, if one man go in, pau, you cannot, nobody can go in.

MM: Yeah, yeah. Oh.

AK: And then, oh boy, they short, the water. In those days, the water, ho, they so grumble about the water, no more enough water, yeah. That's why. And then this, ho boy, I hate to say it, but no more door.

MM: Oh, how shame yeah. (AK chuckles.) No more privacy.

AK: Yeah, no more privacy, though. It's so small, but, anyway, those days, I didn't care because I stay up the ranch. Only sometimes I used to come down because I knew some Japanese ladies, so I used to come down, and Abe had one daughter [Fumiko Abe Watanabe], see. So, I tell her, "Oh, we go down," and she come with me. Boy, sometime some men bathing. Not so good. (Laughs)

MM: I see. So, but the houses up at the ranch, all had their own . . .

AK: Oh yeah. Up the ranch, everybody had their own place.

MM: They have their own outhouse, their own . . .

AK: Yeah, yeah, we had own. But only the toilet was about quarter mile away.

MM: That far?

AK: Far! (Laughs)

MM: Your own toilet was that far?

AK: Yeah, everybody go the other side. Small little thing, too. When the wind blow, you go huli.

(Laughter)

AK: Believe it or not, the people that stay up the ranch can tell you that, I think.

(Laughter)

AK: Really, no. Believe it. Here your house, just like somebody will be thinking, I'm exaggerating too much, but no. Here your house, right above there, you see the garage there? That much. Far.

MM: Uh huh, uh huh. I see. Yeah. That's maybe, that's about 100 yards. (AK chuckles.) So about 100 yards away from your house, I think. Nah, nah, fifty yards, that's fifty yards.

AK: As far as that, you know.

MM: That's fifty yards, that's not quarter mile.

(Laughter)

AK: Ho boy. Because they used to have all the eucalyptus trees, you know, before, over there. And then right under there, had the thing.

MM: I see.

AK: But, for some people, maybe it was near because they live on the other side, yeah. But for us, for me, Abe was on this side from the road on this side, so it's kind of far. But well, those days, we didn't think anything about it. But now, come to think about it.

(Laughter)

AK: Those days, we didn't think anything about it, whether it's far or near or. . . . But now days, everything is so perfectly done that maybe when you think of olden days, yeah, you think, ah well.  
(Chuckles)

MM: So when did you move into your house? This house?

AK: My house? (June 1945.)

MM: Yeah.

AK: Well, I stayed here more than [forty] years, but I used to live--over here, I moved how many times? One, two, three, four, and this the fifth house.

MM: Oh. And now you own this house?

AK: Yeah, yeah, I own this house.

MM: Before, could you buy your house? The other ones, did you buy?

AK: No. That's just rent, yeah. The [pineapple] company. And when we moved in this house, then about two years afterwards, I think, they asked the company people who wants to buy their own house, eh. So, we thought of buying it because cheap, eh. And we thought, the house is big, and the location is good, so we thought, "Ah, might as well we buy."

MM: Yeah, good for you.

AK: Because the house is, well, cheap, that's why. It's old house, but it's cheap.

MM: How much you buy your house for?

AK: I think, no more \$2,000.

MM: Oh. And this is a . . .

AK: (Laughs) And over here, the land was square, I think, five cents, I

think.

MM: Five cents a foot? And this big lot.

AK: Yeah.

MM: You also used to work Richard's Shopping Center?

AK: Yeah, I worked there.

MM: How long you worked over there?

AK: I work over there about . . .

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

MM: And at Richard's Shopping Center, what kind of work did you used to do over there?

AK: At the meat department.

MM: Oh, that's right.

(Laughter)

MM: I shouldn't ask. Okay. So you started working for Richard's Shopping Center about when?

AK: Quite long though. I worked for him, anyway, twenty-eight years, I think, yeah, because my [children] was small yet.

MM: So when did you retire?

AK: I retired when I was about sixty-eight [1976], see. Richard [Tamashiro] told me to, I mean, Wallace [Tamashiro] told me to help little while until get somebody, yeah. I was supposed to retire from sixty-five, eh, but I worked three years. He told me to help him for a while until they get somebody and then train somebody. So I worked, say, about little more thirty years, anyway, I worked.

MM: I see. Gee. Which job . . .

AK: Before I used to work, but when I work clubhouse, half a day, I work--half a day I work for the company, you know, clubhouse; half a day, I go in the fountain.

MM: Lāna'i Fountain?

AK: Yeah, yeah, that Tanigawa. That used to be Endo Fountain before. I

used to work there half a day. I work half a day for plantation, half a day over there.

MM: Okay. And what did you do at Lāna'i Fountain? Cook?

AK: No, Lāna'i Fountain, they serve only ice cream, eh. That was regular, this soda fountain. Ice cream, that's all. The only food they sell was ice cream and the candies, that's all. Because never have cookie, yeah, like that, before.

MM: So which you think was the best job you had?

AK: Best job I had, I think, Richard was best job because I worked there so long. (Laughs) And they were nice, I liked it because the bosses were good, that's why. Like Mr. and Mrs. [Richard] Tamashiro was real nice.

MM: Did you like living up at the ranch or living down in Lāna'i City?

AK: Well, I didn't like the ranch. (Laughs) Because when I came back from Lahaina the second time, the store was there, see. It was a small store, but the store was there.

MM: The store in Lāna'i City?

AK: Yeah, the store was right where it is now, where Richard is there. That's the small little store over there.

MM: Yet Lung--what was the name of the store? The Okamoto Store or Yet Lung?

AK: Yeah, was Okamoto store. Because in the beginning, was Kawahara because it wasn't Okamoto. But Okamoto made money and bought [out] Kawahara, see. Because that place was Kawahara Store before because Kawahara came over here. And then he was working for Kawahara, [Tokuichi] Okamoto, then he bought Kawahara, and came afterwards Okamoto Store.

MM: Oh, so you've seen all the changes on Lāna'i. Which years do you think you like best? You saw so many changes, Lāna'i going through so many changes. (AK chuckles.) Which year do you think you like best?

AK: Ah, well . . .

MM: When was the best time for you?

AK: When was my best time? Maybe when I had all my children here, I think, yeah. With all my children together, yeah.

MM: Everybody growing up?

AK: Yeah. I think that's the best time, when I had my children. (Chuckles)

MM: I see.

AK: Now it's just he and I. I have the children here, but--I have three children here, so, well, I see every time, every now and then. But, still then, it's kind of different if you're in the same house.

MM: Okay. I guess that's it.

AK: All right.

END OF INTERVIEW



# **LĀNA'I RANCH**

## **The People of Kō'ele and Keōmuku**

**VOLUME I**

**Center for Oral History  
Social Science Research Institute  
University of Hawai'i at Mānoa**

**JULY 1989**